REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved
OMB No. 0704-0188

1. REPORT DATE *(DD-MM-YYYY)*	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED *(From - To)*
13-02-2005	FINAL	

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
The United States and Sudan: Recommendations for Re-Engagement

5a. CONTRACT NUMBER

5b. GRANT NUMBER

5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER

6. AUTHOR(S)

Trevor W. Monroe, FS-03

5d. PROJECT NUMBER

5e. TASK NUMBER

5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

Joint Military Operations Department
Naval War College
686 Cushing Road
Newport, RI 02841-1207

8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)

10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)

11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Distribution Statement A: Approved for public release; Distribution is unlimited.

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES A paper submitted to the faculty of the NWC in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the JMO Department. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the NWC, Department of the Navy or Department of State.

14. ABSTRACT

The Republic of Sudan, heretofore largely neglected by American policy makers, is undergoing important changes which promise to transform it into a major player in northeast Africa. These changes hold important regional implications for American interests throughout north, east and sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the Department of State, Central Command and the Agency for International Development must prepare for a broad program of engagement with Africa's largest country. This paper provides background on Sudan, an analysis of U.S. national interests in the region and the strategic considerations at play, as well as a review of the history of U.S.-Sudanese relations. In conclusion, this paper provides operational-level recommendations for the three primary USG actors in Sudan: the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Central Command.

15. SUBJECT TERMS
Sudan; terrorism; engagement; Department of State; U.S. Agency for International Development; Central Command.

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			Chairman, JMO Dept
UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED	UNCLASSIFIED		23	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER *(include area code)* 401-841-3556

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE
Newport, R.I.

The United States and Sudan: Recommendations for Re-Engagement

By

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U.S. Department of State

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy or the Department of State.

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February 13, 2006

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This paper provides background on Sudan, an analysis of U.S. national interests in the region and the strategic considerations at play, as well as a review of the history of U.S.-Sudanese relations. In conclusion, this paper provides operational-level recommendations for the three primary USG actors in Sudan: the Department of State, the U.S. Agency for International Development, and Central Command.

Map No. 3707 Rev. 7 UNITED NATIONS Department of Peacekeeping OperationsMay 2004 Cartographic Section

The Republic of Sudan, heretofore largely neglected by American policy makers, is undergoing important changes which promise to transform it into a major player in northeast Africa. These changes hold important regional implications for American interests throughout north, east and sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, the U.S. Department of State, U.S. Agency for International Development and Central Command must prepare for a broad program of engagement with Africa's largest country.

Background

A country of 40 million people, Sudan is the largest country in Africa, approximately the size of the United States east of the Mississippi River. Sudan achieved its independence from the United Kingdom in 1956. During its fifty years of independence, however, Sudan has been wracked by a prolonged civil war between north and south for almost forty of those years (1955-1972, 1983-2002). The last twenty years of war alone have taken the lives of an estimated two million Sudanese. Indeed, beset by civil war upon its very birth, and combined with a faltering economy, Sudan soon became known as the Sick Man of Africa (a dubious title, indeed, among so many dysfunctional regimes in post-colonial Africa). An admittedly shaky peace agreement is now in place that promises to herald a new chapter in Sudan's history.[1]

While the most ethnically diverse country in Africa, two major divisions punctuate Sudan. The northern portion of the country, to include the capital, Khartoum, is dominated by Muslims of Arab descent. The southern portion consists of black Africans who practice indigenous beliefs and Christianity. Historical concentration of power by Arabs in Khartoum and a campaign of forcible conversion to Islam lie at the heart of the decades-long civil war between north and south. In addition, the discovery and exploitation of oil deposits, largely

within the southern portion of the country, have served to fuel the conflict of late. While ostensibly at war off and on for the past forty years, many southerners will remark that they've actually been fighting Arab raiders seeking slaves for the last four hundred years. Such overwhelming historical grievances, not unlike those found in the Balkans, constitute a major challenge to fostering an enduring peace.[2]

Building on a ceasefire dating from July 2002, on January 9, 2005, the Government of Sudan and the primary southern rebel group, the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The CPA mandates a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Sudanese government troops from southern Sudan, the repatriation of refugees and national elections. In addition, after a period of six years, the people of southern Sudan will be allowed to hold a referendum to choose between unity with the north or independence. The CPA also calls for two parallel government entities; a Government of National Unity and a separate Government of Southern Sudan. The Government of National Unity will sit in Khartoum and be comprised in part by representatives from the south. The Government of Southern Sudan will be located in Juba and be responsible for governance and development of the southern quarter of the country. In March 2005, the United Nations authorized a 10,000-strong peacekeeping force, complemented by 715 police, to assist in the implementation of the CPA. As of February 2006, 6,000 peacekeepers were in place throughout southern Sudan. The prospects for peace, however, were shaken by the death of the charismatic SPLM/A leader, John Garang, in a helicopter crash in neighboring Uganda in July 2005.[3]

The long-running civil war between north and south has remained largely unknown in the west. However, the deteriorating situation in the western Sudan region of Darfur has, in

contrast, been widely publicized. A three-province region approximately the size of France, Darfur has been the scene of widespread violence here, between Muslims, since 2003. Exacerbated by population pressures and drought, in Darfur, nomadic Arab tribes are in conflict with settled African farmers over precious land and water rights. Two rebel groups have sprung up to defend the farmers against the nomads. The Government of Sudan, predictably, has sided with the nomads and provided them with military support. These militia have popularly come to be known as janjaweed, a term for an armed outlaw on horse or camelback.

In September 2004, former Secretary of State Colin Powell first labeled the atrocities occurring in Darfur as genocide. The Department of State has estimated that, to date, close to 200,000 people have died in Darfur, with several hundred thousand more having been displaced. From 2003-2005, the U.S. alone has provided $2 billion in humanitarian assistance to Darfur. In July 2004, the African Union deployed peacekeepers to Darfur. However, these peacekeepers, now numbering approximately 7,000, are widely seen as ineffective, lacking as they do adequate soldiers and transport to police such a huge area. Peace talks between the Government of Sudan and rebel groups in Darfur are ongoing in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. In February 2006, during the chairmanship of the United Nations Security Council, the U.S. intends to press for the transition of the weak African Union-led peacekeeping force to a more robust one led by United Nations peacekeepers.[4] However, the Government of Sudan opposes such a move.

In addition, as if Sudan didn't have enough problems, there is now discontent bubbling in the eastern portion of the country. Likewise here, disaffected ethnic groups feel they are not receiving their fair share of Khartoum's attention, not to mention supposed

largesse in the form of oil wealth. Preventing a new source of bloodshed from emerging in eastern Sudan will constitute another challenge for all parties. An additional wrinkle is the fact that the SPLM/A have not yet reconciled with the other major rebel group in south Sudan, this one representing the Nuer tribe. These and other tribal militias need to be brought into the fold, similar to ongoing efforts in Afghanistan aimed at building a broad-based, pluralistic government.[5]

History of US-Sudan relations

The last forty years of U.S. relations with Sudan have been extremely rocky. Though later restored, Sudan broke diplomatic relations with the U.S. in 1967 over U.S. support for Israel during the Six-Day War. In March 1973, the U.S. Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission were killed by members of the Palestinian Black September terrorist group in Khartoum. The Government of Sudan captured the murderers, but in June 1974 they were released into the custody of the Egyptian government. The U.S. responded in protest by withdrawing its Ambassador for several months. U.S. relations with Sudan further deteriorated after the April 1986 U.S. bombing of neighboring Libya.

In the 1990s, Khartoum also hosted such notorious figures as Osama bin Laden, Carlos the Jackal and Abu Nidal. As a result, Sudan was placed on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism in 1993. In August 1998, in retaliation for the bombings of U.S. embassies in Nairobi, Kenya and Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the U.S. bombed al Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan as well as a pharmaceutical factory outside Khartoum it alleged was involved in the production of chemical weapons.[6]

As a result of Sudan's state sponsorship of terrorism, its arrears on U.S. loans and the overthrow of a democratically-elected government by military coup in 1989, the United

States has enacted a whole host of economic sanctions against Sudan. These restrictions effectively block any commercial exchange between the U.S. and Sudan and prevent U.S. foreign assistance to the Government of Sudan. Humanitarian assistance is permitted by law, but in practice is largely routed through the United Nations, other international organizations and non-governmental organizations. Sudan is also cited for censure in the State Department's annual reports on religious freedom, human rights and trafficking in persons.[7]

Strategic considerations

Following a change of heart by the Government of Sudan, the U.S. and Sudan initiated a bilateral dialogue on counter terrorism in May 2000. Furthermore, Sudan has offered "concrete cooperation" on combating terrorism since 9/11. Perhaps as a result of the ongoing violence in Darfur, though, Sudan has not yet been removed from the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. Regardless, Sudan stands as a strategically important outpost in the U.S. effort to combat both failed states and terrorism throughout north, east and sub-Saharan Africa.[8]

The U.S. is the largest donor for both humanitarian and reconstruction assistance and peacekeeping missions in Sudan. In fact, in 2005, the U.S. provided over 60% of international aid to Darfur and 50% of overall aid to Sudan, spending over $900 million. At the April 2005 Oslo donors conference, the U.S. pledged $1.7 billion (of an overall $4.5 billion pledged) for Sudan in fiscal years 2005-2007. The peace agreement represents an historic opportunity to begin transitioning Sudan from a major aid recipient to a self-sufficient member of the international community. Therefore, in an effort to realize its already significant investment, it is in the U.S. interest to maintain both political leadership and financial support to Sudan in the years ahead.[9]

Sudan currently produces approximately 350,000 barrels of oil per day, with proven reserves listed at 563 million barrels. Through expansion of existing fields and additional pipelines to the Red Sea, Sudanese government officials confidently project that production could reach 750,000 barrels per day by the end of 2006. In addition, large areas of Sudan remain unexplored which are thought to contain significant deposits of oil.[10]

By way of comparison, Nigeria, Africa's largest producer, generates 2.5 million barrels of oil per day. Though currently producing less than one-fifth of Nigeria, as a result of very tight overall supply in world markets (less than one million barrels per day), middle range producers such as Sudan will become increasingly important in assuring reliability of supply and price stability.[11]

While the U.S. does not currently consider Sudan a country of major strategic importance, it does represent a field of potential future major power conflict. This is due to large and growing economic and political interest on the part of the People's Republic of China in Sudan. China consumes the vast majority of Sudanese oil and is the largest investor in the petroleum sector in Sudan, as well as a host of other industrial and commercial ventures. China has also come to be a major arms supplier to the Khartoum regime. Similar to the drama currently playing out over Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions, if the U.S. and/or international community wish to take the Government of Sudan to task for future indiscretions, China, with its UN Security Council veto could very well play spoiler.[12]

Current, future relationship

At the present time, the Department of State has an embassy in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. However, as evidenced by the strained relationship between the United States and Sudan, the embassy has been headed by a chief of mission with the rank of Charge

d'Affaires vice Ambassador (though currently occupied by a former two-time Ambassador) since 1998. All USAID humanitarian assistance programs are currently based in and run out of Nairobi, Kenya (physically closer to southern Sudan than Khartoum and thus logistically easier to assist).[13]

By the fall of 2006, the Department of State intends to establish two new consulates in Sudan. The first will be located in Juba, in the far southern portion of the country, in Bahr al Jebel Province. The second will be located in the far west of the country, in Nyala, South Darfur Province. Currently, American embassy employees fly in and out of these two cities (and throughout the country), but only spend a few days at a time at any one location. The sheer size of Sudan makes the establishment of a forward presence in the south and Darfur absolutely critical.

However, before U.S. diplomats can occupy Juba and Nyala permanently, the Bureau of Diplomatic Security must assess and approve the physical security of the sites in question. Based on the author's experience in Afghanistan, Diplomatic Security is extremely risk averse and security certification could well end up delaying the formal opening of these two consulates. As a point of comparison, U.S. diplomats assigned to Sudan receive the same amount of additional "hardship" and "danger" pay as those assigned to Iraq and Afghanistan (though these three posts admittedly range widely across the spectrum in terms of personal risk). But if diplomats are to "move out from behind their desks into the field," then solutions will have to be found.[14]

A USG-wide review of its Sudan policy is currently underway. The stated goal of a re-engaged U.S. policy toward Sudan is as follows: "Sudan is at peace, with a government

representative of the Sudanese people that makes unity attractive in a referendum." Sub goals include the following:

- A peaceful resolution to the conflict in Darfur within the framework of the CPA.
- Broad and sustained international engagement, support, and funding.
- Immediate humanitarian needs met, with eventual voluntary reintegration of internally displaced persons, refugees, and ex-combatants into functioning local communities.
- More participatory, inclusive, and responsive governance, empowerment of women, and enhanced economic opportunity.
- Public order and stability and accountable, civilian-controlled, security forces.
- Continued effective counterterrorism cooperation.[15]

Recommendations

The lion's share of the official USG effort in Sudan will be borne by the Embassy Country Team and U.S. Agency for International Development. The Regional Combatant Commander is certainly an important player in many countries. However, Sudan is likely to continue to fall off Central Command's radar screen for the foreseeable future as a result of ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as global war on terror concerns region-wide. Central Command does have important contributions it can make which will be addressed in detail below. It should be noted that while Sudan lies in the Central Command Area of Operations, it falls within the Bureau of African Affairs at the Department of State and the Bureau for Sub Saharan Africa at USAID. While ostensibly a mismatch, based on the author's experience, it doesn't appreciably inhibit interagency coordination in Washington.

Department of State: It is incumbent primarily upon the Department of State and the U.S. Embassy Country Team to initiate and sustain a broad program of engagement with Sudan. However, like Central Command, the level and nature of DOS engagement is in large part contingent on existing U.S. sanctions against Sudan. (USAID provision of humanitarian assistance is exempt from sanctions and in practice largely devoted to southern Sudan, in areas outside Government of Sudan control). In the near term, however, there is much State and the Embassy can do to both provide support to the peace process and ongoing humanitarian and reconstruction efforts within Sudan, as well as enhance and expand public diplomacy programs to broadcast the U.S. message to what is sometimes a hostile audience.

Internal to the State Department, there remains much work to be done. As noted earlier, two new consulates are planned, one for the south and the other for Darfur in the west. The State Department must push to open these consulates as soon as physically possible. Getting and keeping people on the ground is crucial to knowing what's going on and, in turn, being able to shape events in the U.S. interest. The Department of State should also examine the rationale of its determination to keep assignments to Khartoum a one-year, two R&R, unaccompanied tour. In practice, this means that Embassy staff are on the ground for barely ten months before picking up and moving on. Equally critical as presence is continuity, a glaring weakness the author witnessed in U.S. Embassy operations in Afghanistan from 2002-2005. State should seek to implement strong incentives for diplomats to remain in country a second year. In addition, the State Department should increase the overall number of staff, as well as the number of language-designated positions at the Embassy. In the current rush to staff-up the Embassy, State is taking all comers, regardless of whether they can speak Arabic or not. Again, similar to the urgent need to staff

Kabul in December 2001, the Department of State has been caught wanting in the field of language proficiency.

To the State Department, supported by USAID, and in tandem with the United Nations, will fall the responsibility of overall coordination of the humanitarian and reconstruction assistance effort along with other major donors. The most essential aspect of this coordination is the ongoing division of responsibility among international donors whereby the U.S., prohibited by sanctions from assisting the north, instead provides aid to the south and Darfur, while the other donor nations provide the requisite aid to the Government of Sudan-controlled parts of northern Sudan. This division of labor is thus far working well and must be maintained until a relaxation of sanctions allows for a more broadened and balanced aid program on the part of the U.S. In addition, State and AID will have to work closely with other international and bilateral donors on the establishment of multi-donor trust funds in an effort to ensure transparency in the aid effort, similar to the international community's efforts in Afghanistan.

Over the long term, the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) will assume, along with other donors, responsibility for a nascent police training program envisioned for Sudan. In the near term, however, large areas of Sudan will have to rely on traditional modes of conflict mitigation until police are ready to take over. In recognition of this gap, State must work with USAID to plan programs to foster such mechanisms among communities throughout Sudan.

Some day in the distant future, it's hoped that Sudan can be weaned from international assistance and care for its far-flung regions by itself. Critical to this goal will be the equitable division of future oil revenues among all parts of the country. This fairness will

be key to the consolidation of trust and, by extension, peace, between Khartoum and the periphery. Therefore, the U.S. and international community must seek to foster transparency in the use of Sudan's future oil wealth, a sum which amounted to $1.4 billion in 2005.

U.S. Agency for International Development: Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world. Appallingly high levels of infant mortality are commonplace throughout the country. Fully one-quarter of children under five years of age are malnourished. Per capita GNP in southern Sudan is estimated to be less than $90 per year. Over 90 percent of the population lives on less than one dollar per day. Life expectancy is a paltry 42 years of age.

Thus, USAID and its partners face one of the bleakest humanitarian situations in the world. USAID currently has programs in the following five broad categories: democracy and governance; economic recovery; support to the peace process; health; and education. While it is not necessary to address each of the above, it is important to highlight the most critical tasks for USAID generally. In fact, to quote the words of USAID's annual report on Sudan, "the political challenge will be to *operationalize peacebuilding* at the grassroots level."[16]

USAID and partner programs in building local capacity in democracy and governance and supporting the peace process will serve as the foundation and for all follow-on efforts. For without peace, there can be no economic recovery, no schools and no clinics. Supporting the ongoing process building peace between north and south and seeking to prevent the worst abuses of human rights are especially critical in the huge expanse of ungoverned territory that is Sudan. Moreover, peace and security initiatives are crucial in an environment where there will never be enough police or UN peacekeepers around.

One particular challenge for USAID will be the four million internally displaced persons in Sudan and another half million refugees resident in camps outside the country.

These two groups represent fully ten percent of the Sudanese population. USAID, working in tandem with the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) will have to closely coordinate efforts to manage this caseload. (A division of labor exists between USAID and State/PRM whereby the former provides assistance to internally displaced persons and the latter assists refugees, by definition those who have crossed an international boundary). Fully 700,000 displaced persons are expected to return to their homes in the south in 2006. Compounding the problem, food insecurity is actually expected to increase throughout southern Sudan in the near-term, as a result of the massive return of Sudanese to their home villages. On top of this challenge, USAID and State will have to undertake contingency planning for a potential influx of refugees into eastern Sudan resulting from possible renewed fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea.[17]

As noted earlier, the importance of establishing a presence on the ground outside the capital cannot be underestimated. In anticipation of it's own move from Nairobi, USAID has ordered its many grantees (non-governmental organizations contracted to perform humanitarian and reconstruction work) to shift their base of operations from the relative comfort of Nairobi to Juba, the future seat of government for the Government of Southern Sudan. However, it looks likely that USAID, as a result of bureaucratic red tape and security concerns, may very well be delayed in establishing its own presence in southern Sudan. And since the Embassy will rely on USAID to provide quarters for its personnel in the immediate term, they too could be delayed in establishing a presence in Juba. This simply cannot be allowed to happen.

Central Command: The plethora of sanctions against Sudan currently allow for no mil-mil engagement whatsoever between the United States and the Government of Sudan. In

the future, however, if sanctions are waived or relaxed, Central Command could make significant contributions to U.S. interests in Sudan and the peace process. Specifically, U.S. military participation in the monitoring of Joint Integrated Units, units of Government of Sudan and SPLM/A (former rebel) soldiers, mandated as part of the peace agreement, would serve to demonstrate U.S. and international commitment to professional standards of conduct on the part of the Sudanese military. In addition, formal U.S. military participation in UN peacekeeping operations, both in the south and west (Darfur), would instill greater confidence in the peace process among former belligerents.

In the future, if sanctions are relaxed and/or humanitarian conditions worsen (due to manmade or environmental reasons), the U.S. military could also bring formidable logistical assets to bear in order to assist emergency relief operations. Sudan, especially the volatile and depressed areas along the Red Sea coast and the borders with Ethiopia and Eritrea, could also be included in Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa humanitarian and reconstruction missions. Most important of all, U.S. military participation in the peace process would give positive assurance to all parties, international and Sudanese, that the U.S. is a full partner in Sudan's transformation.[18]

Another area where Central Command could make a significant contribution to both Sudanese and wider regional security is in the field of border monitoring. To say that borders in Africa are porous would be a vast understatement. As a result, militant groups fighting in one country often find sanctuary in another, thus upsetting relations between neighbors. Better border security would serve to both interdict terrorists and reduce regional tensions, in the process fostering much-needed development.

Counterarguments

Despite the above recommendations, there are considerable counterarguments to a policy of enhanced engagement with Sudan. These consist of both actual constraints on U.S. commitment to Sudan as well as cogent reasons why the U.S. should be more circumspect in the relationship. First and foremost, despite tangible cooperation with the U.S. on counterterrorism, the ongoing violence in Darfur will likely prevent the necessary executive initiative and legislative action to undo the tangled web of sanctions against Sudan. Back-sliding of either of the parties to the peace agreement, non-cooperation by anti-Government rebels in Darfur or an outbreak of violence elsewhere in Sudan also pose significant obstacles to U.S. support. Paradoxically, a sudden influx of oil revenues, compounded by record high oil prices, on top of foreign aid, could well cause an economic shock to fragile institutions in the south. Donor fatigue on the part of both the U.S. and international community could also well set in. Demands on a finite U.S. aid budget or preoccupation with crises elsewhere hold the potential for Sudan to once again fall through the cracks. Lastly, renewed violence which makes operating within Sudan difficult or impossible could easily throttle U.S. efforts, regardless of political commitment.

In addition to actual constraints on the tenor of U.S. engagement in Sudan, there are also compelling reasons why Sudan may not represent a critical U.S. national security interest in Africa. Outside U.S. interest in securing Sudanese cooperation on counterterrorism, Sudan, as a result of both political and physical geography, has limited ability to impact vital U.S. interests in east, north or sub-Saharan Africa. This is evidenced by the fact that Sudan is not even mentioned in the Theatre Security Cooperation Plan for Central Command. Furthermore, Sudan is not a substantial enough oil exporter to make significant near-term contributions to global supplies of petroleum. Lastly, there is the sad

fact that once a new crisis comes along which causes Darfur to fall from the headlines, U.S. interest will wane accordingly.

These counter-arguments notwithstanding, it must be pointed out that in the field of international public opinion, the U.S. reaped significant rewards for its efforts to alleviate suffering in the wake of the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 and the Pakistani earthquake in October 2005. In tackling both Darfur and supporting a broad-based peace within Sudan, the United States can build on its successful efforts at bringing the Comprehensive Peace Agreement to fruition. The situation in Sudan also represents an opportunity for the U.S. to demonstrate its good intentions to the Muslim world at large, but especially in the critical Muslim countries of north, east and sub-Saharan Africa. Doing so represents an extraordinary opportunity to send a message that will reverberate far beyond Africa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Republic of Sudan stands at an historical crossroads. However, while great potential for change exists, one cannot dismiss the daunting obstacles which stand in the way of Sudan's development. In addition, and similar to the author's experience in Afghanistan, the biggest challenges may very well be, on the one hand, managing popular expectations among Sudanese and, on the other, sustaining long term commitment on the part of the U.S. and the broader international community. Working in concert, however, the Department of State, USAID and Central Command can make an important contribution to Sudan's evolution from a failed state to a responsible, well-governed member of the international community.

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